

**Luis Soldevilla**

**Machinery : multi-channel video installation**

Graduation project proposal

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**Aims and Objectives**

The goal is to create an immersive experience for the viewer that empowers him and gives him something in return. A different filmic experience that invites the viewer to reflect on its role and relevance as part of the social machinery. A narrative that makes sense in the space and allows the viewer to dive into the content. As for the thesis, the objective is to set a theoretic background that works as foundation for the visual metaphors to use. Articulate the content in such way that the form goes a step further.

**Rationale**

The main relevance of this work is that it illuminates a condition that the public would benefit from its awareness. Nowadays in this time of over stimulus and a path full's of distractions. I consider relevant to evoke questions that ponder on our role in society. Nowadays people feels that is nothing or very little what they can do individually to achieve a meaningful change on society. The message is simple: don't forget that we are part of this machine. Then if people are just more aware, the limited field of action acquires another dimension. In times like this, in which the perception is in constant change, I consider that we the artist have the responsibility of creating new ways of communicating and spread our message.

**Project Outline, Methods & Approach**

The Machinery video installation places the viewer in front of 4 consecutive projections that conforms a canvas of approximately 12 meters long by 1,7 meters high. This big composition renders a system of elements that interact on mechanical principles and relationships of cause and effect. Gears, situations, actions and elements that trigger each other resembling a production line. A Choreography of interconnected elements working together as different pieces of a superior self-organism.

The images used in the installation depict mechanism within society-s functioning, but more than depicting the social machinery, these images are visual allegories of society as a machine. The visual concept of the installation is to render a system of elements that interact on mechanical principles. A composition of motion and rhythm, a choreography of cause and effect, transformation and change.

The 4 horizontal and consecutive screens create a wide panoramic scenery, giving the video a sculptural dimension that contributes to create an immersive effect within the piece. The panoramic widescreen format lends itself to visually to represent the idea of a production line or a machinery (group of machines working together for a same purpose). The use of many screens allows depicting different situations and ideas, and linked them as gears inside a machine. The Dolby surround sound strengthens the immersive feeling and helps to create a more dynamic motion within the space. This combination of a long format and surrounding

sound makes the video to lose its bi-dimensional character, it allows to use the space as an expressive resource, expanding the image beyond the filmic frame. The fact that the projection has a large format and that is bigger than the viewer, reinforces the idea that the social machinery is much bigger than the individual, and that the person is immersed in these processes. The idea is to visualize these topics through the intricate beauty of an assembly line, a graceful orchestration of machines and people. Elements working in harmony for a kind of super-organism or ecosystem.

I've always been attracted to machines and understanding how they work. As a small kid I disarmed my toys to play with their parts and then re-built them. I even found most interesting what was inside than the toy itself. This mechanical curiosity, my observer personality and my affinity for social issues, made me always be aware of the social machinery and the omnipresence of the system. I developed a tendency to identify protocols and mechanisms of power that helped me to see what was behind certain situations. Machines fascinate me, in matter of industrial design their beauty is undeniable. It is also interesting to realize the design of the interface between the mechanical and electronic components of a machine and its users. The design of a machine is quite particular because functionality and safety are more relevant than the appearance of the product. There is certain beauty in a machine working, its orderly desirability is almost magical, its repetitive and mechanical movements have a special hypnotic grace. I feel driven by the challenge of making a visible manifestation of this much greater system. Creatively it will be very fun to mix and play with machines, motion, actions and ideas. Artistically I feel attracted by the ideas of composition, collage and juxtaposition. This multichannel installation gives me the opportunity to construct my own visual puzzle not only of visual elements but also as ideas and transformation.

The first step will be to obtain as most footage as possible of machines and people in ways that they resembled to the topics mentioned before. The more visually impact and the more meaningful that my images are, the more meaningful and stronger their combination will be. I have to put a lot of effort in obtaining the best pieces and then assemble the puzzle. This project is not about thinking, recording and then editing. Is about doing all of them at the same time. I know in advance that this project will be a lot about putting things together, it is actually a collage, but first I should start for having some raw materials, then start cooking, realize that I need more ingredients, go to the supermarket to get them, then maybe change the idea of the menu and make another dish, what is relevant is to have good ingredients, and a basic idea to start with. I feel quite confident of my taste and ability to combine them and make them look good, the theoretical research and reflection will help this collage to be more meaningful.

A potential problem could be that a multi-channel projection in which each screen shows a different image demands a lot of material. To bring a human factor to the video, I will need images of people, especially a representative working class, this kind of footage is difficult to obtain because many people do not like the fact of being recorded and nowadays factories are very industrialized, which is good to obtain interesting machines, but difficult to have people doing manual works. Besides that, the fact of working on a large multi-projection piece brings a technical challenge that I think is really interesting, this experience will expand my palette of expressive and technical resources for future projects.

## Relationship to Previous Work

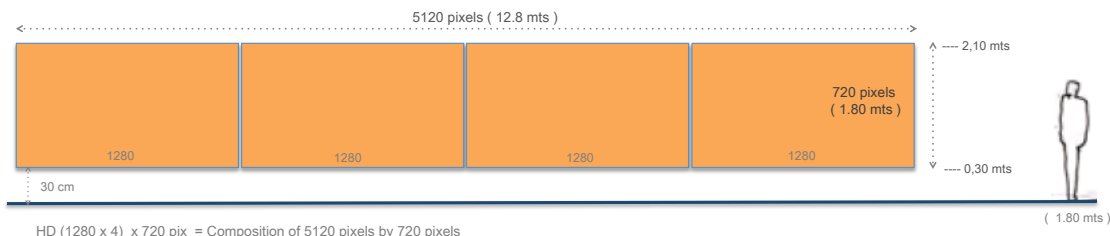
In my work I am interested in researching the landscape as a social portrait of our surroundings. In this sense, to create a work of larger scale and to work with very long panoramic screen (with which I have not worked before) lends itself for continuing this social landscape idea, and of course gives me a more creative and expressive canvas. It will allow me to use relationship of the scale between screen and spectator in favor of the content and not merely as a spectacularization of the image. This idea of a panoramic landscape was also explored in the Paisal video installation ( 2007, <http://vimeo.com/18921588>) for this piece also a multi-channel projection and surrounding sound (3:1) was used. In pieces like the video Day No8 ( 2010, <http://vimeo.com/8848019> ) I have also played with the idea of people in line as products conducted through a transportation belt. And within the master programme I already developed some video test exploring the visual and content approach of this project: Machinery video test No1 ( 2011, <http://vimeo.com/23863746> ) and Machinery video test No2 ( 2011, <http://vimeo.com/25758974> ).

## Expected Outcomes

The media to be employed for the montage of this piece will be:

- 4 video projectors
- 1 video synchronizer (maybe a special hardware and software)
- 4 speakers
- 1 audio Dolby mixer

Below you will find a graphic showing the proportions of the projection in relationship to the spectator. A video registry with some excerpts of the piece will be needed for documentation and promotion.



## Research – Framing the Work

If all machines have as a result (outcome) one product. What the social machinery produces? Is there a raw material and what is the outcome? Into what it transforms? Who operates the machine? ? Who pushes the button ? What is the source of energy of this machinery? What keeps the machine going? In what direction is it going? Do we have an influence as individuals over this machine? Do we have an important role? Can we escape from it?

To answer these questions properly a deep theoretical research together with hands-on approach is required. Then, I may find personal answers, but for the piece I do not pretend the

spectator to “read” my answers. My intention is that the spectator after seeing the piece inquire himself the same questions, and maybe then find his own answers.

These questions will set the foundation for the visual orchestration that I am aiming for. So it is probable that this contents appear in a very metaphoric or sub-textual manner (even in a subliminal way); but I consider them relevant points for the future aesthetic decisions to take that at the same time will influence on the way to set the narrative.

I have the hypothesis that the social machinery outcome is the need to continue growing. It is a machine that it build itself, it regenerates and transforms. And for that purpose needs continuous energy to keep running. And that energy - in addition to the traditional resources - is produced by our effort, our work, our consumption. The machine needs that we keep producing, consuming and working. The Machine pushes us towards the production and not the reflection. We are more useful to the machinery if we follow the flow, the production line, if we consume, not if we think, analyze or reflect. As mentioned before, this is a hypothesis, part of the theoretical and artistic research I intend to do is to confirm or change this premise, always from a position that enhances the relevance of the people and their actions.

## **Review of Field of Research and Practice**

In terms of form this project is closely related to what is know as expanded cinema. Some relevant artists who work with space and multi-channel projections are: Doug Aitken, Isaac Julien, Pawel Wojtasik and Ergin Cavusoglu (among many others) but I mentioned them because of the way they use of video to create immersive installations. In matters of content, a good start would be the industrial cinema in which the “bio-mechanic” concept is very present and – in one way or another - the social machinery is depicted. In *Vertov's Man with a movie camera* we can easily perceive a symbiotic relation between man and machine, and how the director acclaims the human relevance for the functioning of the latter. I consider this movie one of the earliest pieces that depicts society through the motion generated within the city.

Machine as “muses” or as icons of society have being used in art since they appeared in our daily life. One of the first artist to make this stamen clear was Marcel Duchamp who was using useless machines and machine images to question the importance of the artist, and to challenge goal-oriented thinking. An artist that works with machines - in an more sculptural way – is Jean Tinguely, whose kinetic art machines “satirized the mindless overproduction of material goods in advanced industrial society”<sup>1</sup>. . A more related piece in terms of this “transformation of energy” is the piece “Der Lauf der dinge” (the way things go) by the swiss duo artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss, a film that documents a long causal chain reaction assembled of everyday objects, resembling a Rube Goldberg Machine (This last term comes from Goldberg’s series of cartoons in which a character made complex machines to perform simple tasks). Although this piece is more related to the relation cause- effect, it feels like a holistic machine Another more recent artist that reflects about this industrialized processes in society is Mika Rottenberg. In her pieces she makes a sort of weird factories in which surreal characters are featured as bearers of production. What I found interesting is that Rottemberg does an sub-textual speech about labour exploitation and the relationship, effort, cost and products. “*If you simplify it, people use their vitality in order to make products; therefore every*

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<sup>1</sup> Tinguely – Museum. Text about the artist on their website.

*product contains part of the lives of the various that were involved in making it. I like the idea of measuring the value of something not by its “use value” but by the processes that were invested in its making – the amount of “life” that was put into it”<sup>2</sup>.*

Another relevant artist who is interested in factories, machines, and the distribution of labour hand is the photographer Edward Burtynsky. His pieces more than a landscape are a social portray of what is the World nowadays.

### **Critical Self-Evaluation**

To talk about a subject as complex as the social machinery, a thorough investigation from different perspectives is a must, diverse point of views as the anthropological, sociological and even philosophical can broaden the topics and bring new ideas. Definitely a very interesting topic, maybe during the investigation I could feel some affinity towards theories that matches my hypothesis or agree with my point of view about society. Maybe I could feel more attracted to speeches that lend their selves to be easily visually represented. But something more relevant than these discourses is how to link them, how to find the bonds. Well, actually the idea of a line production feels almost “ad-hoc” for this purpose. A relevant criteria for what works or not (besides visual composition, narrative and rhythm) is if the sense remarks the relevance of the people, if the idea highlights the human factor.

### **Initial Bibliography**

For this project proposal not to many texts have being already analyzed or quoted, but some texts have been already selected, between them:

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<sup>2</sup> Mika Rottenberg “dough cheese squeeze” - text accompanied by the artist.

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